

SEASONED EXODUS

The Exile Mosaic of Psyculture

— FEATURE ARTICLE —

GRAHAM ST JOHN
UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND (AUSTRALIA)

ABSTRACT

Psychedelic trance music and culture (psyculture) is explored as a culture of exodus rooted in the seasonal dance party culture evolving in Goa, India, over the 1970s/1980s, and revealing a heterogeneous exile sensibility shaping Goa trance and psyculture from the 1990s/2000s. That is, diverse transgressive and transcendent expatriations would shape the music and aesthetics of Goa/psytrance. Thus, resisting circumscription under singular heuristic formulas, Goa trance and its progeny are shown to be internally diverse. This freak mosaic was seasoned by expatriates and bohemians in exile from many countries, experienced in world cosmopolitan conurbations, with the seasonal DJ-led trance dance culture of Goa absorbing innovations in EDM productions, performance and aesthetics throughout the 1980s before the Goa sound and subsequent festival culture emerged in the mid-1990s. Rooted in an experimental freak community host to the conscious realisation and ecstatic abandonment of the self, psyculture is heir to this diverse exile experience.

KEYWORDS: Goa trance, psytrance, psyculture, exodus, cultural exile, counterculture, festival

GRAHAM ST JOHN is an Honorary Research Fellow at the Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies at the University of Queensland. His book forthcoming with Equinox in 2012 is *Global Tribe: Spirituality, Technology and Psytrance*. Other recent books include *Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures* (Equinox, 2009) and the edited collection *The Local Scenes and Global Culture of Psytrance* (Routledge, 2010). He is the Executive Editor of *Dancecult*. See: <<http://www.edgecentral.net>>. Email: <<mailto:g.stjohn@warppmail.net>>

Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture 4(1): 4–37

ISSN 1947-5403 ©2012 Dancecult <http://dj.dancecult.net>

DOI 10.12801/1947-5403.2012.04.01.01

dancecult
JOURNAL OF ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

PSYCHEDELIC TRANCE was born from winter (November–April) experiments on Anjuna and surrounding beaches in Goa, the former Portuguese colony of India. From the late 1960s, cultural exiles from the West sought refuge in Goa, and during the following decades forged a cultural movement exported back to the world. What became “Goa trance” was a cultural industry indebted to the seasonal DJ-led traveller dance music culture in Goa, which, subsequent to genre-canonisation in the mid-1990s, was transposed to world psytrance, and absorbed by regional party organisations romancing the traveller sensibility that today infuses a global event-culture. Goa trance and its progeny derived from the repeated seasonal influx of aesthetics, performance techniques and drugs imported by transnational travellers experienced in bohemian enclaves, world cosmopolitan centres and clubbing capitals, and who sought newer, exotic and protected plateaus of experimentation. During the 1980s, these expatriate traveller-DJs transported and mixed techniques and music styles from these locales to cultivate a unique, experimental, open-air trance-dance culture relatively isolated from elements suppressing and regulating cultures of conviviality elsewhere. Drawing upon ongoing research conducted on psyculture—psychedelic trance history, culture and music—this article illustrates that psyculture is heir to an experiential complexity embodied in the realisation and abandonment of the self cultivated in this seasonal freak community.¹



FIGURE 1. MANDREM BEACH, GOA, 1991/92 SEASON. PHOTO: LUC PILOT.

SEASONAL DISCOMMUNITAS

GOA TRANCE EMERGED as a recognised marketable genre between 1994–1997, initially as a result of the interventions of producers and label managers Martin Glover, Raja Ram and Simon Posford. Yet, its principal gestation period was during the late 1980s–early 1990s, a period of international optimism which saw the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the dismantling of Apartheid, the popularisation of MDMA and the birth of the World Wide Web. At this premillennial juncture, which also saw the emergence of acid house rave culture in the UK and elsewhere, a transnational electronic dance movement was born whose chief expression was open-air trance dance parties, the inspiration for communities, crews and festivals dedicated to reproducing the Goa experience. While this cultural movement was inspired by India, the “essence” of which became integral to the “traveller” and exile sensibility of psyculture, the latter has also been heavily impacted by the native shamanic practices of the Central and South Americas, among whom are derived the use of various popular shamanic plants and psychoactive decoctions—e.g. *psilocybin*-containing mushrooms, *ayahuasca*, DMT² and other brews and blends—popular among participants. The exile sensibility was achieved as individuals travelled physically from “home” locations and mentally from normative mind states, freedoms of movement enabled by relative disposable wealth and assisted by transpersonalising digital, chemical and virtual media. In Anthony D’Andrea’s (2007) study of “nomadic spirituality” and expressive expatriation, alternative travellers are experienced across exoteric sites and transcendent states—a psychogeography of experience which positions freak travellers at the crossroads of “horizontal” (geo-spatial) and “vertical” (metaphysical, psychedelic) “trips”. As this freak psychogeography facilitated efforts to obliterate and expand subjectivity, Goa was never simply an enclave of strident optimism, a theme amplified in the “progressive” progeny that typically courts philosophies of unity, wholeness and becoming. The perplexity of psytrance culture was compounded in the post-Iraq invasion period by the emergence of dark trance (or “darkpsy”), whose rapid-paced formulation, gothic horror sensibility and dark carnival atmospherics amplified elements of self-annihilation extant in the pioneering exodus.

Exodus is then a practice integral to the emergence of Goa trance, and subsequently psytrance, which accommodates and commodifies the exile experience within its event-culture. Moreover, this is not a homogenous, linear, nor predictable process. Scholars have begun articulating the significance of exodus within EDM, an expanded view of which recognises not only experimental modes of “workplay” (see van Veen 2010), but DiY practices and cultural activism (Rietveld 1998; St John 2001), “queer world-making” (Buckland 2002), “instituant” religious experience (Gauthier 2004) and challenges to the *habitus* born from the “chemical intimacy” of the dance floor (Jackson 2004). Most importantly, it acknowledges the artifice of the exile infusing the socio-aesthetic (dubbed the “vibe”) of world EDMCs (e.g. Fikentscher 2000; St John 2009). Psyculture offers one of the most overt examples of a culture born in exile, whose transnational participants have cultivated a vibe of the exiles, a techno-liberalism flushed with a sensibility of

transit which poaches from various traditions of resistance, transgression and esoterica, yet is innovative and original all the same. The Goa “vibe” is then integral to a countercultural and patently *psychedelic* movement responsive to parent cultures since the 1960s/1970s, and which now carries the memory, even fantasy, of exodus into the present. But this psychedelic vibe is as multidimensional as the exodus performed. As the freaks landing in Goa sought exotic lands, local patronage, altered states of mind and looser modes of embodiment, and as they desired respectful relationships with the locals while embracing “the ‘global’ as the new home and reference” (D’Andrea 2004: 244), the diaspora shaping the Goa aesthetic is populated by exiles with manifold motivations and expectations. “Visionaries” and “plastic hippies” (Howard 1969: 43), “settlers” and “conquerors” (Maoz 2005: 176), activists and outlaws, electro goths and cosmic cowboys, dubmeisters and techno-heads have settled, and mixed, in this outland.

During the 1980s, the electronic music played in Goa was diverse. New wave, dub, electro, synth-pop, new beat, techno and acid house provided the perennially shifting and updated sound of the *discommunitas* evolving, or indeed devolving, in Goa. One of the recurring motifs not uncommon to the legacy of “communitas” outlined by Victor Turner (1974), is that the parties were always “better last year”, in the previous “magic” era, or before so and so showed up with such and such. It is a common perception among older DJs and freaks that Goa declined as its sound was standardised and marketed as a definable genre—among numerous grievances D’Andrea (2010) identifies in the gulfstream of complex globalisation.³ New Zealander Ray Castle, who first DJed in Goa in 1989, and had co-organised “the first Goa style parties in Europe” (Pagan Production, at Ruigoord, Amsterdam, 1988–1991),⁴ has been among the most vociferous of those criticising the aftermath of Goa trance. Castle opposes the normalising of psychedelia codified into its own *nomos*, whose “fundamentalism” is anathema to the fusional and genre-defying roots of psychedelia, which became “like a religion with rules and codes of vibrational resonance, form, structure, regulated rites”.⁵ Normalisation is difficult if not impossible to isolate, however, given the multiplicity of processes—e.g. aesthetic and economic, liberational and regulatory, local and global—effecting any given crew, party, scene or music. Scholars of psytrance dredge the profligate organic metaphors of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to identify the “rhizomatic” network seen in operation (e.g. D’Andrea 2010; de Ledesma 2010; Rietveld 2010), offering something of a heuristic contrast to, for instance, the complex structural processes independently outlined by Turner (1974) and Bastide (1975, see Gauthier 2004). Following the heuristics of these latter theorists, the attenuation of the “religious experience” associated with an epochal moment of spontaneity, synchronicity and togetherness inspires periodic (e.g. seasonal) normative frameworks which professionalise and codify the formative liminality, with subsequent objections triggering a renewed vibe and instances of as-yet-undefined socio-aesthetics. In psyculture, this cyclical modeling may account for cultural and event-industry strategies of party optimisation and commodification inciting counter-movements, splinter crews and protean events, as well as new music aesthetics, the establishment of which causes further break-away movements responding to the perceived

threat to the “vibe”. But this cyclical pattern, if it can be identified, is affected by multiple inputs, including other implicated cycles. The complexity grows as we recognise that the seasonal destination that endured, arguably, for over 25 years, was shaped by wave upon wave of arrivals, with each discerning cohort reckoning how new waves portended the “vibe’s” ebb. Here, I simply want to point out that the historical and ongoing identification of multiple elements counterproductive to the Goa “vibe” has been integral to psyculture.



FIGURE 2. ARAMBOL LAKE 1990/1991. PHOTO: LUC PLIOT.

No formal research had been conducted on the seasoned discommunitas of Goa during its formative periods, i.e. in the 25 years before Goa trance. The only ethnographies are those conducted following the emergence of Goa trance as a genre and the widely reported demise of the scene in Goa. Among these, Arun Saldanha (2007) provides the most dedicated analysis, excoriating the “microfascist” potential in freak “lines of flight” and finding a tendency towards “viscosity” among white freaks in Goa as Indians (locals and domestic tourists) are subject to exclusions within/from parties. While an exposé of the chimerical characteristics of freak transcendence in Goa is laudable, reliant on a materialist theory of race, Saldanha charges psychedelic trance in Goa as racially prejudiced, a conclusion which, despite its Deleuzian inspiration, illustrates a surprisingly one-dimensional rendering of the politics of experience in Goa. Exclusivity is a long-standing feature of the Goa movement. Hidden away in the second last issue of *The Stoned Pig*⁶ was a reminder of the responsibilities implicit to a scene seeking to connect with others while at the same time desiring clandestinity. “We must be discreet, we must have a countenance that projects all we know & respect in the subtlest way. . . . A system that reveals all its secrets is bound

to collapse. As Don Juan said, ‘You must become a man of mystery with no past and no ties, for until you do this, you can be tracked, hunted, killed’ (Snydly 1975: 6). As the secret was exposed, numerous conditions threatened the Goa party vibe, including rank journalism, domestic tourists preying upon mythically “loose” white women, rampant commercialism, police corruption and concerns about “conqueror” backpackers from Israel and elsewhere.⁷ Echoing the complex nature of the exiled sensibility cultivated in Goa, the exclusivity that enabled the perpetuation of the culture and its migration to locations worldwide, and which informs various emergent subgenres, is itself multidimensional, shaped by class, gender, sexuality, as well as race matters, but reductionism to any single determination is disingenuous.⁸

These observations, then, shed light on the complexity of *freedom* at the progenitor-site of psyculture, to which the concept of “heterotopia” (see Foucault 1986; St John 2001b) appears strongly applicable. As Hetherington (1997: 41) conveys, “heterotopia” has been used to denote “sites constituted as incongruous or paradoxical, through socially transgressive practices; sites that are ambivalent and uncertain due the multiplicity of meanings attached to them; sites that have an aura of mystery, danger or transgression about them; sites defined by their absolute perfection; marginalised sites, and; incongruous forms of writing”. Goa’s formative events were “free”, meaning not simply free admission (or entrance with a donation⁹) but facilitating freedoms from labour practices, organised religion, media industries, state surveillance and normative modes of subjectivity. As a successful autonomous zone, Goa’s existence was dependent upon its relative isolation from tourists, journalists, gangs and police; an experimentalism jeopardised and subject to optimisation throughout the history of psytrance. Luther Elliott (2010: 25–6) recognised “prurient media attention” among the incentives for exiles from Haight-Ashbury in the late 1960s. And as D’Andrea conveys, in Goa, freaks cultivated parties where those disrupting efforts to maintain “the smooth space of creativity and experimentation” were deemed outsiders regardless of race/ethnicity (2010: 45–6). Scorning the “packaged” commodification of experience associated with conventional tourism, freaks “present a pragmatic engagement with native cultures, and more closely emulate the skeptical, romantic and elitist gaze of the ‘post-tourist’” (D’Andrea 2007: 177). The identification of, and response to, such scene-threatening behaviour remains consistent in the many places of emergence of psyculture (see Schmidt 2010). As these recent accounts illustrate, there are considerable complications behind the distinctions that normally fall in the wake of scene exposure.

Internal distinctions within this culture grow apparent as one pays attention to differential expectations and aesthetics motivating the exodus that shaped Goa trance in its place of birth. Not unlike other key EDM developments that play host to a medley of cultural brokers, well-travelled DJs and producers, pioneers and genuine remixers of sound and traditions typically estranged from the cultural popstream, Goa’s formative scene was diverse. The beach paradise was a peerless harbour for cultural expatriation, its profusion only now beginning to be properly understood. But understanding does not come easy for prospective cultural historians of Goa. As veteran Swedish Anders informed me, I have myself entered

“a hornet’s nest”.¹⁰ Since the 1960s/1970s, exiles from a multitude of nations cultivating distrust towards inherited religious, scientific, political and economic institutions, sought escape from the nuclear family and a possible nuclear winter through the 1970s and 1980s. They desired liberation from the staged freedoms of consumer lifestyles, departures from social and kinship structures and educational institutions reckoned to inhibit spiritual growth, and from the repressive society that outlawed their own lifestyles—with these departures shaping the cultural movement to come. In Goa, freaks beached themselves in a state of departure, sometimes disingenuously, other times spectacularly, from manifold lifeworld conditions. While the mobility was, for some, greased by “trust funds” and opportunities unavailable to those outside the moneyed classes, for others, Goa was literally the “end of the world”. And while this celebrated location at the terminus of the “hippie trail” through Turkey and Afghanistan was for some an idyllic context to expand consciousness, for others it was the perfect locale to enact one’s own personal apocalypse. From the *bon vivant* to the wretched outcast, the freak exiles and their cultural progeny are “neonoms” (D’Andrea 2007), mobile across physical sites (alternative regions, enclaves, markets and festivals in local and global circuits) and psychical terrain (the journey into the unconscious via the use of *charas*, psychedelics and “entheogens”). While this is the transnational and transpersonal world of the trance dancer, the freedoms sought and achieved are as multiple as the conditions of risk, constraint and oppression in the lifeworld. The liminality of the exile discommunitas was not, therefore, driven by any singular promise of “freedom”.



FIGURE 3. PARTY AT PALMGROVE, 1991. PHOTO: ANDERS TILLMAN.

“ALL WIPED OUT ON BEING”: THE ARTS OF NOTHING

THE SELF-EXILED sensibility in Goa relies on an experiential complex, which, while at no time easy to describe, pivots upon commitments towards the conscious realisation and ecstatic abandonment of the self. These sometimes radically disparate pathways for the self are undertaken in a time when the “immediacy of personal experience . . . is understood as epistemologically crucial” (Partridge 1999: 86). The radical immanence, improvisation and sensuality championed by the Beats and their rootless predecessors in bohemian enclaves and romantic and transcendentalist traditions over the last 150 years or more, was inherited by those who sought Goa in the 1960s and 1970s. Psychedelic trance is rooted in a movement of East-bound seekers who had exhausted their prospects for the awareness or apocalypse of the self obtainable in the West. Iconic figures like the Beatles and Timothy Leary were of course influential. And, following the examples of Ginsberg, Kerouac and Ram Dass, there were those who sought to be like wandering mendicants, channelling the meditative grace and wisdom of Eastern religious traditions, a romance resonating with Goa trance artists adopting the concept of “bodhisattva” (the wandering Buddha), or evolving and promoting personalised modes of continuity with the Brahmanic “Cosmic Spirit”. A full understanding of Goa trance and its progeny would expose the orientalist dispositions in music and associated aesthetics shifted under this rubric.¹¹ Yet such developments do not circumscribe the phenomenological experience to which Eastern religion, philosophy and practice offered meaning. Yoga warriors, audio magicians and ritual syncretists have cultivated lifestyles embodying how, as Allen Watts announced in his 1960 “Nature of Consciousness” seminar broadcast on KSAN radio, “a wave is continuous with the ocean”. Indeed, on “No Such Thing” (*Psychedelica Melodica*, 2007), the UK’s Cosmosis (Bill Halsey) takes notes from the same seminar, sampling, “the basic problem is to understand that there are no such things as things. That is to say separate things, separate events. What do you mean by a thing? A thing is a noun. A noun isn’t a part of nature, it’s a part of speech. There are no nouns in the physical world”. The commentary invokes a message apparent in Goa trance at its inception, with, for instance, the title track of The Infinity Project’s seminal *Mystical Experiences* (1995) featuring Watts meditating on that condition to which travellers, wayfarers and trance dancers have aspired down through the ages: *nothing*. “Imagine nothing. No thing. No me. No you. No world. Nothing”. Today, the experienced trance traveller continues to elicit the feeling. Thus, “I know nothing, and in that nothing is all. ALL!”, states an enraptured woman caught in some revelatory moment on “All Is Nothing”, the only sample on Boris Blenn’s eleventh album, as Electric Universe (*Higher Modes*, 2011).

These sampled commentaries are the compiled sound-bites of hypermobile “spiritual virtuosi” (Sutcliffe 2000) and those Norman Mailer caricatured as “frontiersmen in the Wild West of American nightlife” (1957: 277), who have assayed experience with the assistance of new tools in mind-manifesting, whispering to us via the digital song-lines of the turn of the 21st century the sweet nothings discovered riding out on those frontiers. While the modern

appearance of an esoteric seekership may have commenced with the theosophists, it would later flourish in the years between the World Wars as a “seeker culture” emerged whose participants searched for hidden truths via occult practices (Sutcliffe 2007). It proliferated in the 1960s and 1970s with the turn to Oriental metaphysical praxis, including Yoga and Tantra alongside a plethora of other body-arts facilitating the deification of the flesh and the enlightenment of the body (Kripal 2007). Disciplinary approaches to higher states of consciousness and embodied enlightenment exercised in this period were complemented—some would argue, overshadowed—by other routes to nowhere, where an abandonment of one’s past could be performed; where identity, nation and tradition were exorcised in the uncompromising embrace of chaos, of wild human nature, a rawness known and expressed by poets, artists and dancers, a madness cultivated on the margins of history. Here was the innocence, truth and love that R. D. Laing, in *The Politics of Experience* (1967: 136), thought could be achieved by unlearning that “appalling state of alienation called normality”, a liberation through regression paralleling the “voyage” of psychosis. For growing numbers, the transcendental catharsis could be experienced in transgressive leisure, erotic arts and other voluntary risk-taking activities. Since the 1960s, these routes to experience coalesced in new forms of art, leisure, sexuality and sociality, and in the subversive sites in which these were cultivated, where, in what Erik Davis identifies as “spiritual hedonism” (2004), “edgemen” (Turner 1969: 128) sought an immediacy enabled by new media of transcendence: psychosomatic technologies, personal computers, electronic synthesizers, virtual instruments and other “machines of loving grace”, facilitating an independent cultural economy whose radically reflexive participants possess unprecedented control over the means of perception.

As “children of technique”, forebears of psychedelic trance were altering consciousness on a scale previously unknown, using meditation, acid rock, psychoactive compounds and other technics in experiments with nameless paths and unknowable destinations—the fierce independence of antagonists matched by a savage indeterminacy where what mattered most was one’s embrace of a radical immanence removed from the past and the future. To be a *freak* was to trek multiple paths and experience heteroclitic travails. “Freak” was an acceptable designation for the evolutionary (or indeed revolutionary) mutation from alienation, a break from a failed existence, a counterpoint to the recognised separation from source-spirit-nature to which one “returns”. The *transit* native to this rupture has typically implied a movement *from* a condition of alienation implicit to monotheism, possessive materialism, patriarchy and patriotism, and a corresponding movement *toward* a resolve. Those who joined the exodus in 1960s/70s modelled themselves as a generation in transit, anxious to assume the role of the “new man” and “new woman” via the adoption of dietary techniques, occult sexuality, new architecture, meditation, psychedelics and the return to childhood. A post-humanism was notable, according to Tom Wolfe in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1971, see also Dery 1996: 45), among Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters, who were influenced by, among other things, Arthur C. Clarke’s *Childhood’s End*. At the end of Clarke’s 1953 novel, which depicts the merger of the human species with the

cosmic Overmind, the last generation of (telekinetically enhanced) children on Earth are dancing, a motif picked up by Billy in *The Stoned Pig*: “The last generation of man are dancing blissfully, ecstatically through the forest and jungles. Some move in groups, others alone, all wiped out on being. They are hardly sensible to the physicality of this world, their consciousness is expanding into higher levels of being. Their hair is matted, their clothes rags, they care hardly for food or shelter, eating wild fruits, sleeping in the open, dancing, eternally dancing”. As Billy concluded, that’s “not too far from what happens on Anjuna” (Billy 1975/76: 7).



FIGURE 4. DAWN AFTER FULL MOON PARTY, ANJUNA BEACH, LATE 1970S. PHOTO: TAROT RAY.

The optimism inhering in such views was implicit to the prevailing logic of meditative individuation and the holism embodied in the teachings of the Human Potential Movement. While meditation became integral to Westerners seeking higher states of consciousness, another popular technique of selfhood was trance dance, or what Osho (Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh) deemed “dynamic meditation”. But while Osho offered a route to remembering and reenchantment via his Nietzschean Buddhist charismatic cult, others arriving in India were simply compelled to forget. On Anjuna beach, wrote English-Australian Steve

“Madras” Devas (2004), “we had suntans. We didn’t need history . . . because the only past thing was a chillum”. Devas’ tribute to fellow Goa freak, Amsterdam Dave, “Our Only Story is the Beach”, is a tale about a culture of amnesia as much as it is story about liberation. On his journey overland to India, Devas recalls that “the first letter from my dad waiting for me in poste restante, Kabul, contained a cutting from the *Times of London*, headlined ‘Hippies begging like dogs in Afghanistan’. There was no letter with the article; there didn’t need to be. The inference was clear. *You have become hippy trash*”. Abandoning their pasts, Devas and his companions who reached Anjuna in the 1970s were dwelling “in a hermetic world of falsity, garbled phone calls and hollowed out lifestyles. False IDs, false bottoms, false passports . . . there was so much to *not* talk about”.

Our history safely out of reach
 our only story is the beach
 on the full moon party we are born
 we who from our story torn
 are busy lying
 on the beach (Devas 2004).

Devas clarifies with cutting detail the worlds those from a multitude of Western countries were deliberately leaving behind. “The trauma of being wasp, catholic or pentecostal, the trauma of Vietnam, the trauma of being American . . . the trauma of class, race or nationality, the trauma of being French, Italian or British or German”. For most, he continued,

being from somewhere was at best uncomfortable and often unbearable. How else could you explain the French junkies who plagued the beach, a bewildered generation withered by class hatred, who turned to heroin to dress their wounds? The Italians? What was their stone? The unbearable lightness of religion? And the Germans, not one of my German friends ever talked about the war and the welts of pain lacerating the German psyche. The awful G word hanging over them like a black cloud, emasculating joy, castrating self expression, no colours anymore, I want them to turn black, I want to see the sun—blotted out from the sky, I want to see it painted, painted . . . painted black (Devas 2004).

Although being a “freak” presupposed the journey of transformation integral to spiritual awakenings fomenting in the 1960s and 1970s, it also signalled the desire to discard the past in an apocalypse of subjectivity fuelled not only by LSD, but cocaine and heroin. Cleo Odzer’s (1995) well-known account of addiction, excess and depravity includes an incident in which a “French junkie” fell down and died in a village well. You can feel the bones crunch and taste the rotten effluence down through the years as the protean music and scenes to come amplified fecklessness at the same time as they attempted a meaningful resolution. The parties surfacing in the wake of this freak tsunami would become host to these disparate roads to nowhere, enabling unravelings and inaugurating becomings—junctures remote from places of origin and yet designed to welcome travellers “home”.

The homecomings were celebrated as far back as the late 1960s, though according to Goa veteran Peter Thomas (aka Blond Peter)—who published an alternative Goa newsletter in 1973/74 called *Pigs & Palms*—seminal among the early Goa parties were those held in the palm-leaf compound at Blue’s place just back from South Anjuna beach (now called Curlies). Thomas recalls the period:

Blue was the only openly gay sadhu hippie on the India scene at that time, into jewellery, EST, people, parties, local Goan motorcycle boys and giving elaborate presents to people he liked. His parties were always ‘the cream of the cream’ and the music may have started out as acoustic folk rock, but there was already a trance element with everyone singing, drumming, hand-jiving and generally getting into it. On a full moon, the pre-party at Blue’s was the best preparation for a loooooong night. We had bathing facilities prepared, good food and a candle-lit environment—it was also a refuge when things got too intense. Sadly, I heard Blue died of an AIDS-related disease some years later. He challenged the macho Hippie Raj ethos, because he had solid overland credentials, and he brought a new expectation of tolerance and a unique personal majesty to the scene.¹²

Gathering at the terminus of the hippie trail at the edge of the world, parties were the pinnacle achievement of a community that, as Thomas further relates, “was not based on any sect, but rather on a mutual unspoken decision to encourage harmony”. But, he added, “we all knew that it could not last” (Thomas 2011).

In the heyday of freak settlement, before the vein of experience itself collapsed, the uninhibited, exclusive and unmediated parties at Blue’s c1973, and countless other refuges established off and on the beach, were laboratories for a barely definable state of being *other* shared by the swarms washing up on Anjuna and other beaches. Sampling a line from psychiatrist and early LSD researcher Sidney Cohen speaking on the BBC documentary, *The Beyond Within: The Rise and Fall of LSD* (1987), Shpongole co-founder Simon Posford (as Hallucinogen) offered further clarity on the desired-yet-inexpressible state on “Dementia”, the opener on *The Lone Deranger* (1997): “There is an area of the mind that could be called insane, beyond sanity, and yet not insane. Think of a circle with a fine split in it. At one end there’s insanity. You go around the circle to sanity, and on the other end of the circle, close to insanity, but not insanity, is unsanity”. The well-known sample strikes a note on the Goa party which, as a context for becoming mind-less in trance, carried the legacy of Blue and other architects of the Goa tradition. It references a state of mind that, while immeasurable and indefinable, is that which one desires to revisit. And revisit it they did, in greater frequency, in greater numbers, and with more and more kit. Wouter Thomassen (aka Zen Mechanics) appears to highlight the circumstance on “Psychotropical Nights” (*Universo Paralello*, 2008) where Francis Ford Coppola—interviewed in *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker’s Apocalypse*, about the making of *Apocalypse Now!*—reveals: “We were in the jungle....There were too many of us....We had access to too much money...too much equipment...and little by little we went insane”. And LSD, the most prolific manufacturer

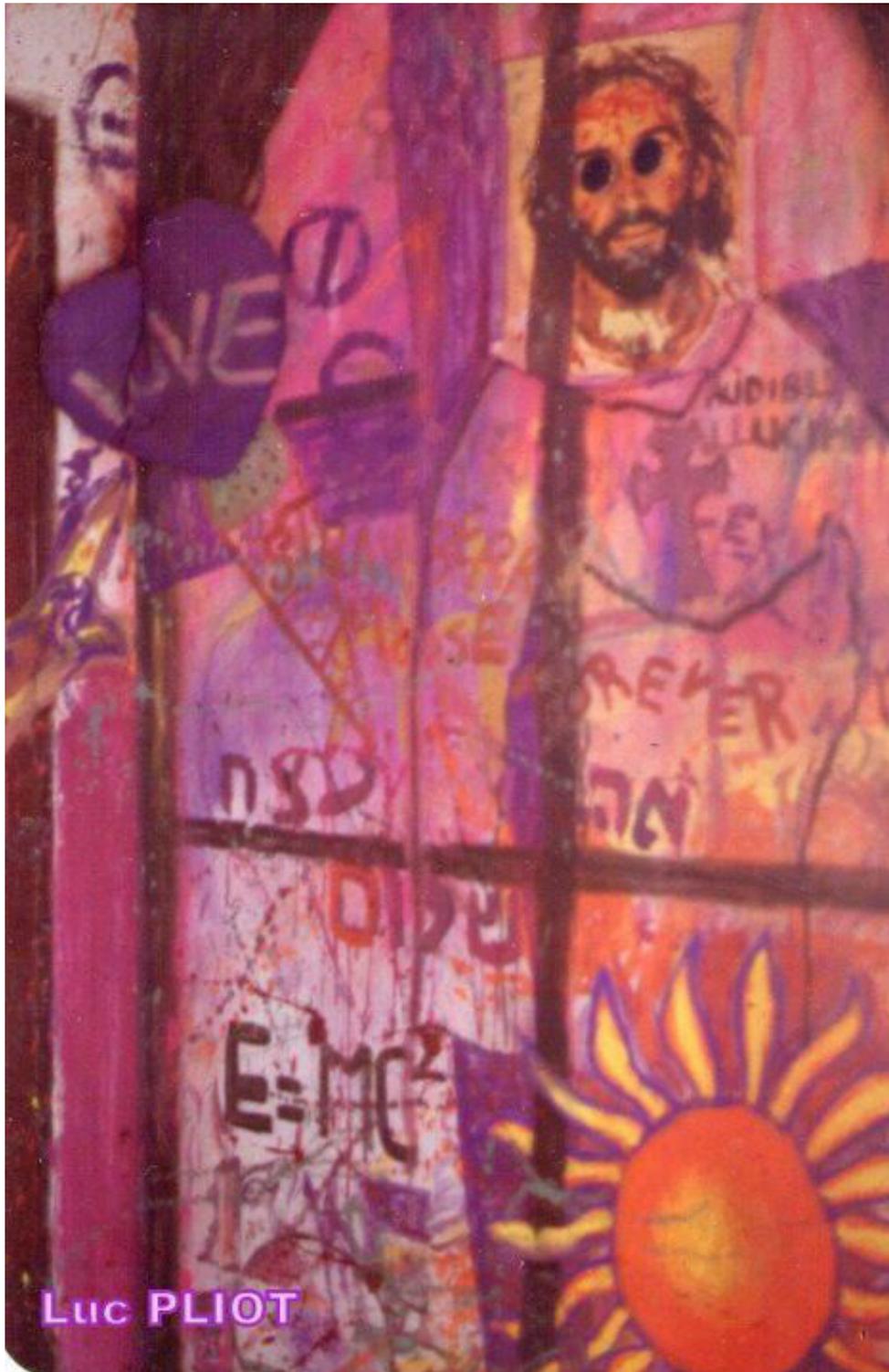


FIGURE 5. MONKEY HOUSE. PHOTO: LUC PLIOT.

of which (Bear Owsley) was rumoured to have arrived in Goa in 1974 “bearing gifts”,¹³ was integral to sending protagonists in the Goa story way “up river”, far from history, and out of their minds. As Bromell (2000: 88) wrote, “the person who has seen the mysteries, or just tripped, can never return to the world as it used to be. He, or she, is an exile forever now, cut off from the simple comfort and complacency in which those who have never glimpsed another reality dwell”. Those who got off the world and arrived in Goa in the 1970s, often by long and circuitous route, had achieved the ultimate party destination, where they would continuously get off together.



FIGURE 6. EIGHT FINGER EDDIE, MID-1970S. PHOTO: ANDERS TILLMAN.

FULL MOON AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

AS A RESULT of the diverse influences and the commitment to celebrate in seasons often imagined to be the last, Goa travellers would “party like there was no tomorrow”. From around 1966/1967, freaks like the noted Eight Finger Eddie, began descending on Goa, which after 450 years of Portuguese rule, held a reputation as one of the most hospitable locations on the subcontinent, and in the East. In Elliott’s (2010: 28) estimation, “whether it was intrinsic affability or economic hardship that motivated the amicable relations, most accounts of the 1970s in Goa cast the villagers of Calangute, Baga, Anjuna, Vagator as friends and business partners”. Goa was among the most permissive and tolerant locations in India, where *charas* (hashish) was legal until the mid to late 1970s and was (and remains) cheap.



FIGURE 7. SWEDISH ANDERS (ANDERS TILLMAN) LATE 1980S. PHOTO: CARLOS.

While various Goa beaches had been host to ecstatic dance gatherings from the late 1960s, Anjuna became the location for the famed full-moon gatherings. These foundational events were sumptuous and extravagant occasions encouraging the most spectacular individual style among participants.

As Swedish Anders (Anders Tillman) recalls, “in the seventies, we were the deco . . . and we spent the whole month creating our dressup”.¹⁴ By the mid-1970s, the full-moon parties were an experimental showcase for what Devas called the “Cosmo Rock movement”.¹⁵ By the mid-1980s, electronic music had completely dominated what by then had become a DJ-led scene in Anjuna. Most accounts of the culture make reference to DJ Goa Gil and DJ Laurent as principal pioneers,¹⁶ but there were various other unsung pioneers who shaped the movement. Arriving in February 1970, Anders DJed at private parties from 1976/77, and in that season worked at the Rose Garden in Anjuna playing music from tapes all night “creating a story” for the crowd. While introducing styles like Brazilian soul funk, his most memorable achievement was introducing disco, explaining that Donna Summer’s “Love To Love You Baby” was “the first trance song”, with its producer Giorgio Moroder regarded as “the grandfather of trance”.¹⁷



FIGURE 8. MIXING HUT, FULL MOON PARTY, ANJUNA BEACH, 1979. PHOTO: GILBERT GARCIA.

Another notable early DJ was German Paoli, Paoli Münchenbach, who arrived in 1975 and played rock including Captain Beefheart, Zappa, Tyla Gang, along with “krautrock” material from Can, Neu! and Faust, and by 1978 was playing afrobeat, afro psycho rock, jùjú, Latin and funk. Also that year, he claims he played the first 12-inch records on cassette in Goa, reeling out reggae and heavy dub over the next two years, including material from the likes of Keith Hudson, The Detonators, Dr. Alimantado and specifically Reggae Regular’s 12-inch extended version of “The Black Star Liner” (which ran to 9:25 minutes).¹⁸ Arriving from Paris in 1979 and often performing in a sparkling gold outfit, Fred Disko was the pioneer of electronic soundscapes in Goa. While electronic music had been introduced to Goa dance crowds before, Disko experimented with full sets of mostly German punk new wave electronic music from the 1979/80 season. Cutting out lyrics on cassette tapes at the Saint Tropez French House outside Chapora from 1980/81, Disko played experimental splices of Yello, Joy Division, Throbbing Gristle, A Certain Ratio, the Residents, Lene Lovich, Nina Hagen and Tuxedomoon, among others, throughout the period of transition from rock to electronic.¹⁹ This was not an easy transition, but from its inception, the music performed was diverse, and as Anders explained, distinct scenes evolved on different Goa beaches: “we had our different strata, partially based on where we went to live, Candolim, wealthy, Baga, the oldest, who didn’t move along to Anjuna, where we were more progressive, and Vagator, where they wanted to distance themselves, from the rest, also the latest comers, and Arambol, the Hippies, they still play acoustic music there”.²⁰

But while these artists and showmen were instrumental in shaping the destination, it was Laurent’s contribution that is commonly recognised as legendary, with one recent commentator, Dave Mothersole (2010), identifying him as “the real father of Trance. A true legend . . . just as Chicago had Ron Hardy and Detroit had The Electrifying Mojo, Goa had a DJ called Laurent”.²¹ Having played parties on a rented barge on the Seine, Laurent arrived in Vagator in early March 1984. Maintaining harvest of a steady supply of fresh audio-cargo from Europe and the US, he used tape cut-up techniques—working with the same Sony devices he used for mixing—and blending new wave, Italo-disco, EBM, new beat, goth, electro, hi-NRG, synth-pop and house to create mesmerising sets through the 1980s, shaping the sound of Goa. One can imagine Front 242’s post-apocalyptic “Commando Mix” (1984) and the quavering siren and thump of Neon’s “Voices” (1988) echoing down the beach and out to sea, or the instrumental version of Poésie Noire’s electro “Timber” (1987) cutting swathes through even the hardened among jungle ravers, or otherwise becoming set adrift to Jean-Michel Jarre’s “Zoolookologie” (1985). Right through the decade, the re-edited work of Blancmange, Cabaret Voltaire, A Split Second, DAF, Konzept, Microchip League, Revolting Cocks, Shriekback, Signal Aout 42, Trilithon and other outfits favoured by Laurent were stitched together sans the vocals to animate the proto-trance massive for up to 10 hours at a time. Laurent’s style simply resisted categorisation.²² “Real psy”, for Castle, “is beyond genre”. According to Castle, the distinctive feature of the collision of styles in Goa in the late 1980s was its “plural diversity”. “Each track had narrative personality and character. Goa, 80s–94, wasn’t driven by labels and music industry. Travellers and collectors

exchanged music. The best tracks were distilled down over the party season and played in the parties by discerning DJs”. And it was Laurent who “had the sharpest perception of which music cut it for the emerging Goa atmos-logos, drawing from access to the most discerning collector sources. These sound nuggets he was able to weave, using tape player decks, into seamless, empowering, marathon mosaic mixes for tripped out dancers”. As he further recalls, “the 80s techno/acid house/neu beat/electronic body music” of which Laurent was the lead conductor, was generally under 130 BPM, which gave dancers “more space for expressive movement”(Castle as genkigroove 2010).



FIGURE 9. DJ LAURENT. PHOTO: TERESA SCONFIENZA.

By the mid-1980s, entering this mosaic was “like stepping into another world”, writes Mothersole, a former south London soul-boy who, in 1986, reportedly failed to “show these hippies what it’s all about” (2010). Mothersole and other commentators have favourably recalled the wild diversity of those gathering in free clandestine parties hosting barely a few hundred people, possessed by an animated spirit unknown anywhere else. Karin Silenzi de Stagni cherishes the experience of never knowing or caring who the DJ was.

For me, coming from drumming parties in the jungle of Brazil, this was the international update of a ritual celebration. At the beginning, I felt it was too electronic for my taste, but after few sips of [Acid] Eric’s punch and some good basic earthy beats

weaved with melodic samples from diverse cultural backgrounds it worked the magic on me and couldn't stop dancing... even now!! I didn't like when the music were only synthesizers. . . . [I wanted] some South American carnavalito, some Arabic singing, some African drumming or other ethnic spices to touch me deep.²³

By the late 1980s at parties of under 500 people, Castle recalls how speaker stacks were “predominantly set up in a circle formation so that dancers were not just facing a DJ on a stage with typical two speaker stacks flanking. Dancers moved around the dance floor 360 degrees, interactively, holophonic, circular, within jungle/palm tree fields of sound”. The DJ was secondary and obscure, he continued in typical flourish, “This was not celeb idolatry music biz. It was luminous, participatory, transpersonal, communal. Underground in an exceptionally, exotic, obtuse, mystical dance dharma zone, where cows would appear within the dusty gusto of dance floor ignition frenzy frequency feasts” (Castle as genkigroove 2010).

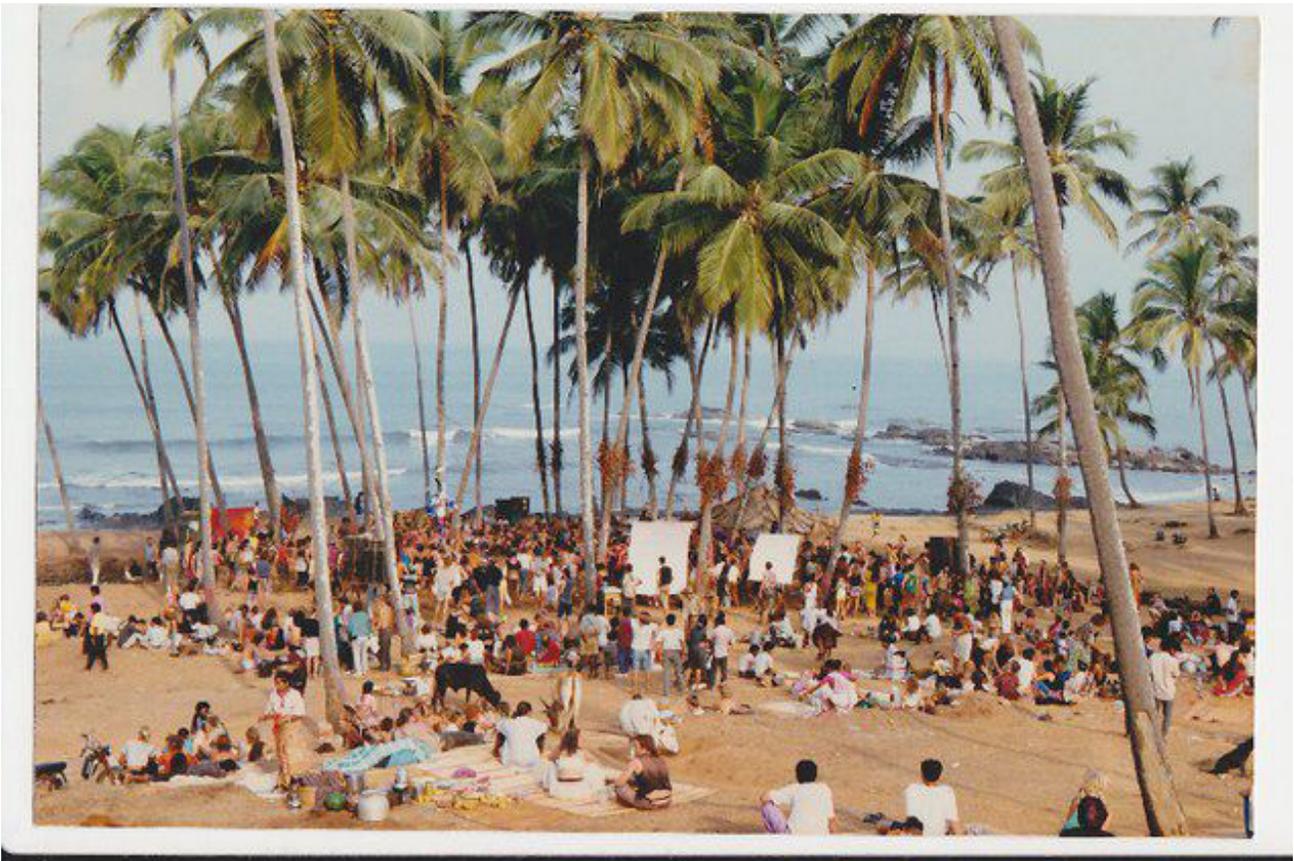


FIGURE 10. VAGATOR BEACH, GOA, 1991. PHOTO: CHRISTINE LE VOYER.

“NO ONE CAN KNOW ABOUT THIS. YOU UNDERSTAND? NO ONE.”

THE DIVERSITY of sounds propagating across the beaches and thumping within the jungle hinterlands of Goa were resounding echoes of the scene's roots in a complex global network of cosmopolitan centres and a consequential profusion of 1980s electronica: industrial, EBM, acid house, techno and trance sounds. The circulation of MDMA had become a crucial factor by the end of the 1980s, fuelling formative domestic dance scenes like the acid house scene in the UK, and the acid techno/house scene in Spain described as *la ruta del bacalao*. As Anders pointed out, in 1987/88 “people spent the whole weekend driving between Valencia and Madrid, the parties were made in discos, parking lots of supermarkets, and wherever they'd get away with it. . . . Chimo Bayo was one of the main artists, and we did play some of that music”.²⁴ Under the influence of the Frankfurt techno-trance sound, Detroit techno and acid house from Chicago, and with the intense repurposing of the sounds of “acid” programmed on Roland TB-303 bass synthesizers and TR-808 drum machines, there were seasonal anthems, such as The KLF's 1988 release “What Time Is Love (Pure Trance version)” (1988) (see Rietveld 2010: 74–5). By the turn of the 1990s, the Goa sound was carrying what Rietveld (2010: 79) calls a “psychedelic *motorik*” amplified in the trance or hard trance coming out of Germany. Amid the noise of influences, precise origins and transition points are difficult, if not impossible, to determine. Therefore, while the techno-trance music that was known as the “Frankfurt sound” had a bearing on the Goa sound, Goa trance did not strictly evolve *from* music denoted as “trance”, but simply absorbed 1980s styles into an evolving aesthetic flourishing within an enduring experimental dance scene, which, by the turn of the 1990s, gained word-of-mouth recognition as a “trance dance” culture. What then came to be known as “trance” developed into various commercially successful genres including “progressive trance”; the latter influencing the sound of what had become recognised as “psytrance (and especially “progressive psychedelic”) by the end of the 1990s. Replying to a thread on the Discogs discussion group “Goa/Psy-Trance”, Meltdown23 (2010) offers insight on the early 1990s development:

The music was from all over europe and elsewhere, ebm, new beat, italia house, spanish ebm, the odd english track, all spliced and diced by the then DJs. For me in goa 1990 it was mainly the last remnants of new beat being played there, but to those who were there in 91 and 92 that was the start of what we called Trance Dance, as a way of collectively describing the music we heard, but its true to say, that if one of these songs was isolated on its own it could only be called techno or ebm, (or nowadays Old School) but once played in a set with similar music and edited and chopped it became Goa trance Dance, well to us at least, And 92 was no different really apart from the music becoming even more melodic, and to be honest artists were not making music specifically for goa at that time, it was of course a Dj led scene

The same commentator adds further insight on the birth of the Goa sound: “from 93 onwards the music was produced specifically for goa in mind, all these early goa producers

were just trying to mimic what they had heard from the pioneering djs and extend it musically, its then that the music changed into the genre we now know ... after 92 djs from england and elsewhere started arriving in goa to play their take on the goa sound, this is when it changed” (Meltdown23 2010, *mistakes in original*).

While objections have been raised about the formulation of genre implicit to those efforts to refine and define the seasonal mixes in tracks released on EPs and albums, others have warranted that this process enabled excellence. This is, not unsurprisingly, the position of Martin Glover, who made seasons in Goa for ten years and founded the first Goa trance label, Dragonfly Records, in 1993.²⁵ Signing the early The Infinity Project, Hallucinogen, Man With No Name, Doof, Total Eclipse, Pleadians, Shakta and others, Dragonfly rapidly became the engine-house of the London (and global) psychedelic trance scene. “As it became more and more popular and the sound followed this evolutionary curve into high-octane trance”, Glover confirms that “the bandwidth of expression” suddenly became narrow. “But in some ways”, he adds, “that was good. It did cut out a lot of chaff from the wheat. It had to be really good to fit into that bandwidth and some artists really redefined it because of that and took it even further like Simon Posford and X-Dream” (in Photon 2005). Dragonfly operated from the studio of Glover’s Butterfly Records where Posford worked as a studio engineer. As Hallucinogen (co-founder of Shpongle and member of many other acts and collaborations), Posford pushed the boundaries of the possible, becoming instrumental in the psychedelic trance emergence. Yet, a host of DJ-producers stamped their influence on the coming sound. Dane Ian Johansson (Ian Ion) was another Goa convert, perfectionist and powerhouse, who had led 1980s punk synth-pop act Russia Heat and produced one of the first popular anthems specifically made for Goa, “Sundown” (The Overlords, 1991), later forming projects Koxbox and Saiko-pod with Frank Kiehn Madsen (Frank E). And there were many other principal artist-travellers who would capture and translate the sound of the exile psychedelic *motorik* to global domestic settings.²⁶ With backgrounds in diverse styles and scenes, these artists became members of an emergent global psychedelic trance network.

By the early 1990s, Goa had attracted attention from DJs, freaks, tourists and authorities alike, with its popularity becoming the cause of its own decline. By then, the population of international visitors had grown dramatically, as had police corruption and the presence of the local mafia. By 1991/92, there was a massive influx of travellers from the world over as parties grew from near 200 to 1,500 per event and were forced further afield, like Maharashtra. By 1995, Goa trance had registered as a marketable genre, by the winter months of 1997, tourists would outnumber Goans, and by 2000, club tourism had become rife (Saldanha 2002: 45). There is no simple pathway through this story, as different releases produced during the peak period convey. Take, for instance, Paul Oakenfold’s *A Voyage Into Trance* (Dragonfly, 1995) which offered a vision splendid: “Imagine yourself in a 4000 year old ruined temple, somewhere half buried in the jungle, fluro painted vines and trees, a 20k turbo charged rig, burning fire sculptures, and a few hundred wildly painted, crazy party people dancing non-stop for three days”. The cover features a mendicant in head-dress whose message-board has been replaced with an advertisement for Dragonfly’s previous



FIGURE 11. PARTY AT MAHARASHTRA FORT, EARLY 1990S. PHOTO: ANDERS TILLMAN.

release, the seminal *Order Odonata Vol. 1* (1994). But while new releases were being distributed like exotic sonic travel brochures, others were hesitant to divulge the secret. Another 1995 release, Technossomy's "Germination (Huge Rant mix)" (*Timepiece* EP), repeated the lines: "No one can know about this. You understand? No one".

Precisely when Goa ended as a scene destination is the subject of considerable debate. It depends on who you talk to, what criteria they base their assertions upon and what interests they have at stake. As Davis (1995) reported, the scene was already declared an historical subject by 1993/94. Castle witnessed the loss of the "magic" back in 1989, stating that "this once, secret, DANCE-DHARMA-ZONE, became much publicised and the parties more difficult to make and less magical".²⁷ In the following year, police stepped-up their interventions, shutting down and preventing parties over that season, and demanded higher "protection" overheads (*baksheesh*). If we listen to Devas, the death knell sounded c1978, with original freaks outraged by the public trashing of the beach signalled by the sounds of electronica. And if we read veteran Bombay Brian (2011), who coined the phrase "Hippy Raj", paradise was lost c1973 with the advent of the Garbage Bazar (the Flea Market) on Goonball Beach. It seems more useful to surmise that Goa was scuttled by a series of detonations throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s whereby shifting musical aesthetics/



FIGURE 12. BAMBOO FOREST 1991/92. PHOTO: LUC PLIOT.

technics, drug trafficking, media exposures and increased flows of commercial, law enforcement and other state interests saw the irreversible alteration of the original site of attraction (see Saldanha 2002; D'Andrea 2010). For many commentators, the “mystery” would be tracked, hunted and killed by swarms of backpackers, journalists, investors, traders, dealers, police, foreign and domestic tourists, promoters, cokeheads, cultural geographers and anthropologists descending upon the scene of the sublime since the 1970s. But what is the end of an era for some may for others be the start of a “golden time”. Take Timur Mamedov (aka XP Voodoo), the Russian DJ-producer who first appeared in Goa in 1994, began DJing there in 1996, and would become a party promoter (Van 2003). While Goa might have served as a doormat upon which countless patrons left their scuffmarks, for Goa Gil, Mamedov and others, Goa became a doorstep to the world. For mediators and entrepreneurs, the Goa aesthetic was transposed worldwide, even while Goa trance was being interred at its site of origin.



FIGURE 13. GOA 1991/92 SEASON. PHOTO: LUC PLIOT.

SCHIZOID “STATE OF MIND”

While Goa’s seed was distributed on the winds, it has not been my intention to explore this distribution in detail here (see St John 2010; Rom and Querner 2011), but to demonstrate the heterogeneous roots of psyculture. Much remains to be understood of the decades in Goa that shaped the psytrance movement, and the emergence of psyculture in locations worldwide from the 1990s, but by way of conclusion, I note ways in which contemporary psyculture carries the Goa heritage. This culture and its music derive from the interchanges of those carrying multiple motives and leaving no singular impression. Since the late 1960s, beaches, headlands and inland jungle on the coast of Goa became home to a diverse mix of expatriates and experimentalists who, over successive seasons and through waves of innovation, technique and artifice smuggled in by countless enthusiasts, fashioned the party scene from which transnational psyculture was born. According to common understanding, Goa is not a place, but a “state of mind” (see Elliott 2010), a sentiment extolled by, among others, Goa Gil. While one of the great exponents of the transposability of this condition worldwide, Gil is among many ambassadors of the seasonal mind state evolving in Goa whose interventions (e.g. parties, releases, labels) have shaped the movement that followed. There have been many sites of origin and efflorescence of this “state of mind” cultivated by cultural exiles (i.e. Haight-Ashbury, Laguna Beach, Maui, Ibiza), but Goa is the central island in a

transnational archipelago of experimentation. Historically, the seasonal experimental zone has been connected to bohemian enclaves, autonomous zones and frontier art colonies, including Free Festivals and cosmopolitan EDM scenes flourishing around the world from the 1970s and 1980s. Harboring itinerant populations of visionaries and outlaws, dreamers and psychotics, Deadheads and discoheads, over the many years of dance party evolution, and especially during the formative period of EDM performance of the mid-1980s to early 1990s, Goa provisioned for the obliteration of meaning and the discovery of the self in the company of fellow wayfarers. Like the freak enclaves in which it was networked, this trance dance *discommunitas* grew, perhaps more accurately, as a schizoid “state of mind”, and, as such, echoed its origins in multitudinous expatriate convulsions.

The emergence of Goa trance and the demise of Goa as a traveller’s scene, are often recognised to be interrelated. The impact on Goa itself has been discussed by others, but in terms of psychedelic trance music genre and culture, a common understanding is that the “plural diversity” that was unique and integral to the parent scene and early trance-dance developments was lost to tightening aesthetic codes and music formulas, industry standards and professionalisation.²⁸ While we are currently lacking detailed studies of the cultural economy of the psytrance industry—an industry supporting a great many livelihoods in a global network of scenes with distinct regional and historical influences—such studies will undoubtedly shed light on these claims. Here, I wish to point out that the musical formulas and event cultures downstream from the Goa tradition, which are designed to mirror that tradition, show signs of inheriting its multiplicity. From the annihilation of memories, ethnonational identities and personal biographies (through the ab/use of drugs), to the transformation of one’s self and personal relationships as a prerequisite for making desirable changes in the world (through therapeutic, entheogenic and ecological practices), psyculture is impacted by the transgressive and transcendent extremes of expatriate practice. For example, in scenes worldwide, the quest for obliteration enabled on cocktails of an ever-widening range of substances, from cocaine to DMT, and from ketamine to LSD, and a plethora of “research chemicals”, dances alongside ambitious exercises among participants to “be the change”, the promotion of holism, renewable energies and sustainable lifestyle choices within the context of Goa-derived psyculture. As there is considerable internal controversy enveloping genre categories, community debate over energy use practices, the impact of specific psychoactive substances, and around the concept of “psychedelic” itself, and that event-culture continues to absorb new sounds while retaining a “psychedelic” heritage, rather than being a stifled behemoth, psyculture is a continuing source of creative tension and renewal.

While most research on psytrance evades anything other than the most rudimentary of analyses of the music itself, in a welcome entry on the continuing musical diversity in UK psytrance, Charles de Ledesma (2010: 107) argues that the UK scene retains the “psychedelic trance rhizome”. Said to be “founded on collaborative working practices, a sensual, adventurous and serendipitous approach to sonic construction and a healthy disrespect for convention”, UK psyculture appears to channel the Goa mind state as much in the way it has established aesthetic protocols and hybrid formulas to facilitate a functional dance format, as in its refusal

to take itself too seriously. Globally, disparate sensibilities extant throughout the formative seasonal party culture are especially memorialised in music productions, as evidenced by vocal samples programmed into tracks like sonic billboards, echoing and effecting the motivations of participants. For instance, Polish-born and Hamburg-based partnership Lightsphere's (Aga and Waldek Biskup) "progressive" anthem "Intersession" (*Oneness*, 2011) samples the view that "there's a voice in the universe, entreating us to remember our purpose, our reason for being here now, in this world of impermanence. The voice whispers, shouts and sings to us, that this experience . . . of being in form, in space, and time, has meaning". The optimistic narrative promises a resolution repeated in countless productions and conscious "projects" (e.g. initiatives like The Infinity Project, Akasha Project, the original Etnica Project, and Antaris Project) which sample from science fiction cinema to offer keys to unlock the mysteries within, inaugurate "cosmic consciousness" and facilitate the re-integration of the self. At the darker edge of the psychedelic trance continuum, however, there lies an abiding nihilism, a penchant for disintegration, often relying on samples from horror cinema. On "Aknofobia" (*Contagion Vol. 1*, 2008), Demonizz bursts out with "do I look like someone who cares what God thinks"? (delivered by Pinhead in *Hellraiser: Bloodline*, 2006). In audio narratives like this, one abandons the search for meaning under a maudlin mood at accelerated BPM. Thus, "Save The Planet" (*Baphomet Engine 2*, 2009) hosts the sampled rejoinder: "for what"? And with Narcosis' decidedly paranoid "Cosmic Fear" (*Exploding Madness*, 2007), which evokes the epic peril of being alive, or in furious psychedelia drawing influence from power and noise music like that found on Terror Lab Industries' *Extreme Noise Terror Vol. 1* (2010), we are remote from the cosmic wholesomeness of Goa trance.²⁹ But then, are we far removed from sites of origin when these developments echo the goal of parties mounted at "the end of the world": to blur, if not obliterate, the essentially whole Self?

Finally, the seasoned festival communities of contemporary psychculture worldwide are heirs to the seasonal alternative cultural heterotopia that evolved in northern Goa on the shores of the Arabian Sea. Disparate liminalities—transgressive and proactive—long established within countercultural scenes like that in Goa are extant within these temporary communities. Event-cultures dramatise "logics of sacrifice" performed by actors possessing varying motivations who may be in disagreement over the meaning of events, disputes that are the legacy of a heterogeneous counterculture (St John and Baldini 2012; St John 2012a, 2012b). Facilitating the joyful excesses of abandonment and ethical risk-avoidance practice, events like Portugal's Boom Festival, itself inspired by Goa, accommodate imperatives—including the pleasurable and conscientious—integral to the global psytrance movement. While these imperatives may be in dispute, they are not incompatible, as festal industries orchestrate compromises in hybrid events facilitated by management techniques and by a psychedelic sensibility that ensures the liquidation of differences. While there remains much to be understood about psytrance, and transnational psychculture more widely, its survival is indebted to the diverse cultural resources to which it is heir, its strange prosperity apparently reliant upon a longstanding psychedelic sensibility as much as economic necessity, interconnected elements ensuring the continued establishment and destabilising of authorised versions.

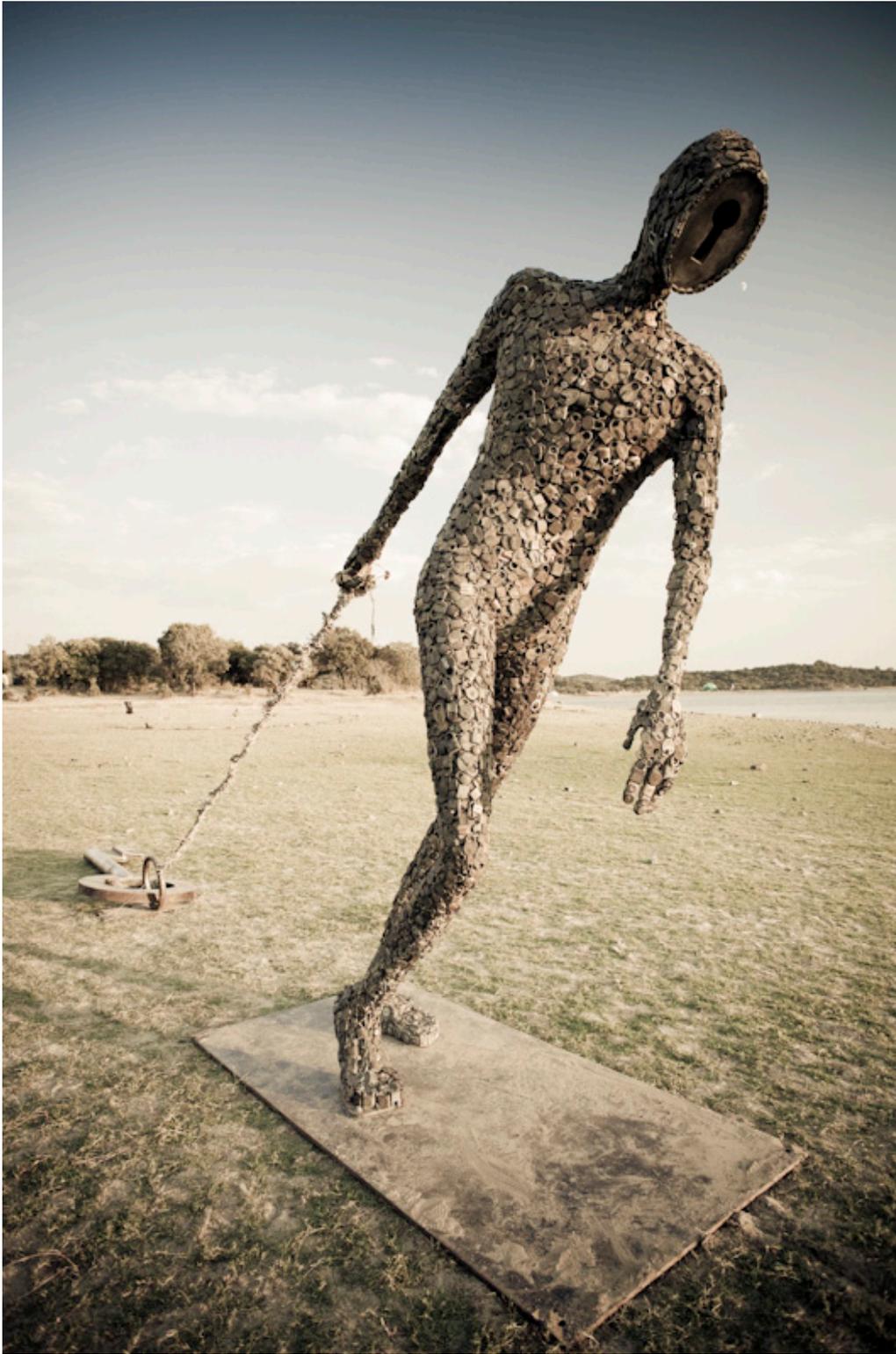


FIGURE 14. "KEYNOTE" BY MICHAEL CHRISTIAN. BOOM FESTIVAL 2010, PORTUGAL.
PHOTO: RÉMY-PIERRE RIBIERE <[HTTP://WWW.RUYPHOTO.NET](http://www.ruyphoto.net)>.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Deep bows to those who assisted me in my search for information for this article, the subject of which is expanded upon in my forthcoming book *Global Tribe*. Among the luminaries to whom I am grateful are Peter Thomas, Steve Devas, Anders Tillman, Goa Gil, Pauli Münchenbach, Fred Disko, DJ Laurent, Ray Castle, Karin Silenzi de Stagni and Dave Mothersole. I thank all of the photographers for the use of their fabulous work: Luc Pliot, Gilbert Garcia, Anders Tillman, Goa Gil, Teresa Sconfienza, Tarot Ray, Carlos, Christine le Voyer and Rémy-Pierre Ribiere. Finally big ups to the fine copyeditors at *Dancecult*.

NOTES

- 1 See St John (2012a), the content of which expands upon the position taken here.
- 2 *Ayahwasca* refers to psychoactive infusions or decoctions prepared from the *Banisteriopsis Caapi* vine typically mixed with the leaves of dimethyltryptamine (DMT) containing species.
- 3 Scene decline is a common subject of analysis among EDM researchers today. Following from Reynolds' (1998: 86) criticism of the "darkside" within EDM scenes whose regulated clubbing environments are populated by "dead souls, zombie-eyed and prematurely haggard", an emerging literature observes scene fragmentation and decline as a result of dissipating "solidarity" or wayward vision identified as consequential to excesses in the consumption of drugs such as MDMA, cocaine and ketamine, and to commercialisation, sexual predatorial behavior, regulatory strictures and other factors. For example, see Kavanaugh and Anderson (2008), Anderson (2009) and D'Andrea (2010).
- 4 Ray Castle, email to the author, 7 March 2011.
- 5 Ray Castle, email to the author, 12 November 2010.
- 6 *The Stoned Pig* was produced by Tarot Ray in six issues over the year 1975/76. Issues were distributed at full-moon beach parties on Anjuna beach.
- 7 Although Maoz (2005) identifies various types of Israeli backpackers including the "conquerors", the "Manalis" and the "settlers".
- 8 See D'Andrea (2009) for a detailed critique of Saldanha's thesis.
- 9 Funds have been routinely necessary in order to "tip" police—i.e. pay "baksheesh", customary to party organisation in "contact zones" where protection is a chief consideration of party organisers.
- 10 Anders Tillman, email to the author, 21 December 2011.
- 11 I offer details on this elsewhere (St John 2012a), but here I simply want to convey some thoughts about the nature and form of the spiritual technologies adopted and practiced without being constrained by scornful and prejudiced discourses which will dismiss complex practice as evincing "cultural appropriation", as "Orientalist", "primitivist" or simply "New Age", etc (e.g. Bizzell 2008)—discourses invariably set at a comfortable remove from their subject matter.
- 12 Peter Thomas, email to the author, 14 July 2011.
- 13 Peter Thomas, email to the author, 25 July 2011.

- 14 Motioning towards the beginnings of the trance textile fashion industry, Anders stated that afterwards “lots of us then made more copies, and brought to Europe to sell” (email to the author, 21 December 2011).
- 15 Steve “Madras” Devas, email to the author, 10 March 2011.
- 16 Gil’s efforts are legendary (see McAteer 2002; St John 2011). For the only extant interview with Laurent, see Davis (1995).
- 17 Anders Tillman, emails to the author, 21 November and 5 December 2011. Today Anders performs sometimes as Missinginka.
- 18 Paoli Münchenbach, emails to the author, 20 and 27 December 2011. In 2011 Paoli was resident DJ at Bambuddha, Ibiza and still played in Goa at 9 Bar, Saturday Night Market and elsewhere. This is not intended to be a comprehensive document on early Goa DJs, but others included Zaki, an Israeli from Baga, Peggy, a reggae DJ, and German Blonde Thilo.
- 19 Fred Disko, communication with the author on Facebook, 4 October 2011. For a fuller account of the 1970s/1980s DJ scene in Goa and the uneasy transition from rock to electronic music, see St John (2011, 2012a).
- 20 Anders Tillman, email to the author, 5 December 2011.
- 21 Mothersole’s article is reproduced in this edition of *Dancecult*.
- 22 Most of these artists and tracks turned up in lists that Laurent himself provided on a Discogs discussion thread, as further detailed in St John (2012a). Laurent can be seen performing in this rare video, “[Goa party \(Maharashtra\)](#)” from 1992.
- 23 Karin Silenzi de Stagni, communication with the author on Facebook, 12 October 2011.
- 24 Anders Tillman, email to the author, 21 November 2011.
- 25 Glover had been bass player in Killing Joke, wrote, produced for and performed bass with The Orb, worked with Ben Watkins (Juno Reactor) and Alex and Jimmy Cauty (of The KLF). He has also produced for Kate Bush, Crowded House, The Verve, Kylie, and U2. As Youth, Glover became a crucial dub-influenced experimentalist (see Partridge 2010: 196) who effectively guided the sound into electronic psychedelia as heard on releases on sub-label Liquid Sound Design.
- 26 Including Raja Ram (The Infinity Project, Shpongle and owner of TIP World / TIP Records), Martin Freeland (Man With No Name), Tsuyoshi Suzuki (member of Prana and founder of Matsuri Records), Jan Müller and Marcus C. Maichel (X-Dream), Mark Allen (member of Mindfield and owner of Phantasm Records), James Monro (member of Technossomy and co-founder of Flying Rhino Records), Ben Watkins (Juno Reactor), Chris Deckker (member of Medicine Drum, founder of Return to the Source label/club, and founder of Earthdance), Avi Nissim, Lior Perlmutter, and Yaniv Haviv (members of Israel’s Astral Projection and founders of the label Trust in Trance), and Olli Wisdom (aka Space Tribe and organiser of the Saga parties).
- 27 Ray Castle entry at *Fusion Anomaly*: <<http://fusionanomaly.net/raycastle.html>> (accessed 23 May 2010).
- 28 See, for example, Grover Smith (aka Ott)’s, humorous declamation in de Ledesma (2010: 104).
- 29 The contested realities presented by “progressive” and “dark” sensibilities are discussed in St John (2012a).

REFERENCES

- Anderson, Tammy L. 2009. *Rave Culture: The Alteration and Decline of a Philadelphia Music Scene*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Bastide, Roger. 1975. *Le Sacré Sauvage et Autres Essais*. Paris: Stock.
- Billy. 1975/76. "Dance For Dance Sake". *The Stoned Pig*. Issue 5: 7. <[http://www.goaheadspace.com/stonedpig/album/Issue 5/index.html](http://www.goaheadspace.com/stonedpig/album/Issue%205/index.html)> (accessed 4 July 2011).
- Bizzell, Victoria. 2008. "'Ancient + Future = Now': Goa Gil and Transnational Neo-Tribalism in Global Rave Culture". *Comparative American Studies* 6(3): 281–94.
- Bombay Brian. 2011. Post in response to "GOA: some origins" by Blond Peter. *The Flower Raj Blog: escapers, seekers, travellers in the land of the Gods: India revisited*. 4 May: <<http://blog.theflowerraj.org/?p=1050>> (accessed 4 July 2011).
- Bromell, Nick. 2000. *Tomorrow Never Knows: Rock and Psychedelics in the 1960s*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Buckland, Fiona. 2002. *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making*. Middletown, CA: Wesleyan University Press.
- Castle, Ray (aka genkigroove). 2010. Post to the thread "Goa party video 1992 + help needed". *Discogs*: <<http://www.discogs.com/groups/topic/159529?page>> (accessed 9 December 2010).
- D'Andrea, Anthony. 2004. "Global Nomads: Techno and New Age as Transnational Countercultures in Ibiza and Goa". In *Rave Culture and Religion*, ed. Graham St John, 236–55. London: Routledge.
- . 2007. *Global Nomads: Techno and New Age as Transnational Countercultures in Ibiza and Goa*. New York: Routledge.
- . 2009. "Chromatic Variation in Ethnographic Analysis". Review of *Psychedelic White: Goa trance and the Viscosity of Race* by Arun Saldanha. In *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 1(1): 147–50. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2009.01.01.13>>.
- . 2010. "The Decline of Electronic Dance Scenes: The Case of Psytrance in Goa". In *The Local Scenes and Global Culture of Psytrance*, ed. Graham St John, 40–54. New York: Routledge.
- Davis, Erik. 1995. "Sampling Paradise: The Technofreak Legacy of Golden Goa". *Option* 61. <http://www.techgnosis.com/index_paradise.html> (accessed 10 March 2011).
- . 2004. "Hedonic Tantra: Golden Goa's Trance Transmission". In *Rave Culture and Religion*, ed. Graham St John, 256–72. London: Routledge.
- de Ledesma Charles. 2010. "Psychedelic Trance Music Making in the UK: Rhizomatic Craftsmanship and the Global Market Place". In *The Local Scenes and Global Culture of Psytrance*, ed. Graham St John, 89–113. New York: Routledge.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Dery, Mark. 1996. *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century*. New York: Grove Press.
- Devas, Steve "Madras". 2004. "Our Only Story is the Beach: The Life and Times of Amsterdam

- Dave". Unpublished document.
- Elliott, Luther C. 2010. "Goa is a State of Mind: On the Ephemerality of Psychedelic Social Emplacements". In *The Local Scenes and Global Culture of Psytrance*, ed. Graham St John, 21–39. New York: Routledge.
- Fikentscher, Kai. 2000. *"You Better Work!": Underground Dance Music in New York City*. Middletown, CA: Wesleyan University Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1986. "Of Other Spaces". *Diacritics* 16(1): 22–7.
- Gauthier, François. 2004. "Rapturous Ruptures: The 'Instituant' Religious Experience of Rave". In *Rave Culture and Religion*, ed. Graham St John, 65–84. London: Routledge.
- Hetherington, Kevin. 1997. *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering*. London: Routledge.
- Jackson, Phil. 2004. *Inside Clubbing: Sensual Experiments in the Art of Being Human*. Oxford: Berg.
- Kavanaugh, Philip R., and Tammy L. Anderson. 2008. "Solidarity and Drug Use in the Electronic Dance Music Scene". *The Sociological Quarterly* 49 (1): 181–208.
- Kripal, Jeffrey. 2007. *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Laing, Ronald David. 1967. *The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise*. London: Penguin.
- Laurent. 2010. Post in Reader Comments to Dave Mothersole's "Unveiling the Secret—The Roots of Trance". *Bleep43*. 28 April: <<http://www.bleep43.com/bleep43/2010/4/14/unveiling-the-secret-the-roots-of-trance.html>> (accessed 25 June 2011).
- Maoz, Darya. 2005. "Young Adult Israeli Backpackers in India". In *Israeli Backpackers: From Tourism to Rite of Passage*, eds. Chaim Noy and Erik Cohen, 159–88. Albany: State University of New York.
- Mailer, Norman. 1957. "The White Negro: Reflections on the Hipster". *Dissent* 4: 276–93.
- Meltdown23. 2010. Reply to the thread "Goa trance dj's from back in the days??" in discussion group "Goa /Psy-Trance". *Discogs*. July: <<http://www.discogs.com/groups/topic/168381>> (accessed 25 June 2011).
- Mothersole, Dave. 2010. "Unveiling The Secret—The Roots of Trance". *Bleep43*. 14 April: <<http://www.bleep43.com/bleep43/2010/4/14/unveiling-the-secret-the-roots-of-trance.html>> (accessed 21 January 2011).
- Odzer, Cleo. 1995. *Goa Freaks: My Hippie Years in India*. New York: Foxrock.
- Partridge, Christopher H. 1999. "Truth, Authority and Epistemological Individualism in New Age Thought". *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 14(1): 77–95.
- . 2010. *Dub In Babylon: The Emergence and Influence of Dub Reggae in Jamaica and Britain from King Tubby to Post-punk*. London: Equinox.
- Photon, Nigel. 2005. Interview with Youth. *Revolve*: <<http://www.revolve.co.uk>> (accessed 9 July 2007).
- Reynolds, Simon. 1998. *Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Rietveld, Hillegonda. 1998. "Repetitive Beats: Free Parties and the Politics of Contemporary DiY Dance Culture in Britain". In *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain*, ed. George

- McKay, 243–68. London: Verso.
- . 2010. “Infinite Noise Spirals: Psytrance as Cosmopolitan Emotion”. In *The Local Scenes and Global Culture of Psytrance*, ed. Graham St John, 69–88. New York: Routledge.
- Rom, Tom and Pascal Querner. 2011. *Goa: 20 Years of Psychedelic Trance*. Solothurn/Switzerland: Nachtschatten Verlag.
- Roszak, Theodore. 1995. [1968]. *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Saldanha, Arun. 2002. “Music Tourism and Factions of Bodies in Goa”. *Tourist Studies* 2(1): 43–62.
- . 2007. *Psychedelic White: Goa trance and the Viscosity of Race*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Schmidt, Joshua I. 2010. “(En)Countering the Beat: Paradox in Israeli Psytrance”. In *The Local Scenes and Global Culture of Psytrance*, ed. Graham St John, 131–48. New York: Routledge.
- Snydly. 1975. “The Connection”. *The Stoned Pig*. Issue 6: 6–7. <<http://www.goaheadspace.com/stonedpig/album/Issue%206/index.html>> (accessed 21 September 2011).
- St John, Graham. 2001a. ed. *FreeNRG: Notes From the Edge of the Dance Floor*. Melbourne: Common Ground. Download available at: <http://undergrowth.org/freenrg_notes_from_the_edge_of_the_dancefloor> (accessed 12 March 2012).
- . 2001b. “Alternative Cultural Heterotopia and the Liminoid Body: Beyond Turner at ConFest”. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 12(1): 47–66.
- . 2009. *Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures*. London; Oakville, CT: Equinox.
- . 2010. ed. *The Local Scenes and Global Culture of Psytrance*. New York: Routledge.
- . 2011. “DJ Goa Gil: Kalifornian Exile, Dark Yogi and Dreaded Anomaly”. *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 3(1): 97–128. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2011.03.01.05>>.
- . 2012a, forthcoming. *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality and Psytrance*. London: Equinox.
- . 2012b, forthcoming. “The Logics of Sacrifice at Visionary Arts Festivals”. In *The Festivalisation of Culture: Place, Identity and Politics*, eds. Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor and Ian Woodward. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- St John, Graham and Chiara Baldini. 2012. “Dancing at the Crossroads of Consciousness: Techno-Mysticism, Visionary Arts and Portugal’s Boom Festival”. In *Handbook of New Religions and Cultural Production*, eds. Carole M. Cusack and Alex Norman, 521–52. Leiden: Brill.
- Sutcliffe, Steven. 2000. “‘Wandering Stars’: Seekers and Gurus in the Modern World”. In *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality*, eds. Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman, 17–36. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- . 2007. “The Origins of ‘New Age’ Religion Between the Two World Wars”. In *Handbook of New Age*, eds. Daren Kemp and James R Lewis, 51–76. Leiden: Brill.
- Thomas, Peter (aka Blond Peter). 2011. “Goa: some origins”, *extracted from his work in progress ORIGINALLY. The Flower Raj blog: escapers, seekers, travellers in the land of the Gods: India revisited*. 30 March: <<http://blog.theflowerraj.org/?p=1050>> (accessed 20 September 2011).

- Turner, Victor. 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine.
- . 1974. *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Van. 2003. "Interview XP - Spun Records Aerodance". 27 September: <<http://www.chaishop.com/article/985>> (accessed 3 October 2011).
- van Veen, tobias c. 2010. "Technics, Precarity and Exodus in Rave Culture". *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 1(2): 29–49. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2010.01.02.02>>.
- Wolfe, Tom. 1971. *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. New York: Bantam.

DISCOGRAPHY

- Baphomet Engine. 2009. *Baphomet Engine 2*. Manic Dragon Records (CD): MDREC14. <<http://www.discogs.com/Baphomet-Engine-Baphomet-Engine-2/release/2004797>>.
- Cosmosis. 2007. *Psychedelica Melodica*. Phantasm Records (CD): PTMCD163. <<http://www.discogs.com/Cosmosis-Psychedelica-Melodica/release/991922>>.
- DJ Transgenic. 2010. *Extreme Noise Terror Vol. 1*. Terror Lab Industries (CD Comp): TLICD001. <<http://www.discogs.com/DJ-Transgenic-Extreme-Noise-Terror-Vol1/release/2346051>>
- Electric Universe. 2011. *Higher Modes*. Electric Universe Records (CD): ELU1CD004. <<http://www.discogs.com/Electric-Universe-Higher-Modes/release/2799283>>.
- Infinity Project, The. 1995. *Mystical Experiences*. Blue Room Released (CD): BR005CD. <<http://www.discogs.com/Infinity-Project-Mystical-Experiences/release/33087>>.
- Hallucinogen. 1997. *The Lone Deranger*. Twisted Records (CD): TWSCD1. <<http://www.discogs.com/Hallucinogen-The-Lone-Deranger/release/20583>>.
- Lightsphere. 2011. *Oneness*. Audioload Music (CD): ALM1CD003. <<http://www.discogs.com/Lightsphere-Oneness/release/2886962>>.
- Narcosis. 2007. *Exploding Madness*. MoonSun Records (CD): MSUCD002. <<http://www.discogs.com/Narcosis-Exploding-Madness/release/913610>>.
- Overlords, The. 1991. *Sundown*. Antler-Subway (CD, Maxi-Single): AS 5051CD. <<http://www.discogs.com/Overlords-Sundown/release/176853>>.
- Paul Oakenfold—*A Voyage Into Trance*. 1995. Dragonfly (CD, mixed): BFLCD14. <<http://www.discogs.com/Paul-Oakenfold-A-Voyage-Into-Trance/release/12454>>.
- Reggae Regular. 1978. *The Black Star Liner*. Greensleeves Records (7-inch): GRE004. <<http://www.discogs.com/Reggae-Regular-The-Black-Star-Liner/release/1610235>>.
- Technossomy. 1995. *Timepiece*. Symbiosis Records (Vinyl): SYMB005. <<http://www.discogs.com/Technossomy-Timepiece/release/1706087>>.
- Various. *Contagion Vol. 1*. 2008. Dead Tree Productions (File): DTP002. <<http://www.discogs.com/Various-Contagion-Vol-1/release/1430838>>.
- Various. *Let It Rip*. 1997. Matsuri Productions (Vinyl): MPLP10. <<http://www.discogs.com/Various-Let-It-Rip/release/55700>>.

Various. *Order Odonata Vol. 1*. 1994. Dragonfly Records (CD): BFLCD 13.
<<http://www.discogs.com/Various-Order-Odonata-Vol-1/release/50425>>.
Various. *Universo Paralello*. 2008. Vagalume Records (CD): VGLCD005.
<<http://www.discogs.com/Various-Universo-Paralello/release/1240784>>.

FILMOGRAPHY

Bahr, Fax, George Hickenlooper and Eleanor Coppola. *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*. 1991. USA: American Zoetrope. <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0102015/>>.
“Goa party (Maharashtra)”. 1992. Youtube, 24:05. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0FzuhqxWA0>>.
The Beyond Within: The Rise and Fall of LSD. 1987. BBC.